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FM REO BASRAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0335
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0008
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0007
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
INFO RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0354

C O N F I D E N T I A L BASRAH 000071

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IT'S OFFICIAL -- THE BOYCOTTS ARE OVER

REF: BASRAH 19

CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah,
Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) On May 7 at a joint press conference held at the British Consulate, the Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) and the British Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) and military publicly announced the end of the BPC boycott of the British. The boycott officially had been in effect against the British and the Danes since February 14, and the BPC had voted to end it on May 3 (reftel). Originally scheduled for the BPC building, the Governor requested that the press conference be moved in the aftermath of the downing of the British helicopter on May 6 (septel). Local and international media covered the public statements made by the British Consul General (CG), the Chairman of the BPC and the UK Brigadier General from the 17th Brigade.

¶2. (SBU) The BPC was represented by seven members: Governor Mohammed al-Wa'eli, Chairman Mohammed S.S. al-Obadi, Deputy Chairman Khalif Shamhud Busta, Ghali Najam Muter, Aqil Talib Khadim, Salah Ismail al-Batat, and Hakim Abdul Sahib Kadum. British CG Robin Lamb and Brigadier General James Severed represented the British. The Regional Coordinator and Deputy Regional Coordinator represented the Basrah Regional Embassy Office.

¶3. (C) In a brief meeting at the British CG's office prior to the press conference, the Governor spoke first to offer his condolences for the lives of the British soldiers lost when the British Lynx helicopter was shot down on May 6. In addition, he stated that a full investigation would be conducted into the clashes between Iraqi citizens and UK military at the crash site. The Brigadier thanked the Governor for his kind words and praised the efforts of the Iraqi Police Service and the Iraqi Army in securing the site. BPC member al-Batat asked the Brigadier to have patience with Iraqi youth. Hakim Abdul Sahib Kadum reminded the Brigadier that the situation in Basrah is still volatile and suggested that British troops should keep a low profile for the remainder of this week. When asked by the British CG about the boycott of the Danes, the Governor replied that the boycott of the Danes also had ended.

¶4. (SBU) The press conference included statements by the British CG, the BPC Chairman and the Brigadier. There was a brief question and answer period following the statements that primarily focused on the events of May 6. Afterwards, several local media representatives separately interviewed the British CG and the Governor.

¶5. (C) Comment: The press conference proceeded as planned

despite the last minute change of locale. The Governor, feeling pressure from Baghdad and elsewhere to bring the BPC out of its self-imposed stalemate with the British, acted with some BPC Fadillah party members to push the rest of the BPC to end the boycott. Both sides, the BPC and the British, knew the importance of quickly moving forward with publicly announcing reengagement given the events that had occurred the previous day. It remains to be seen, however, how the events of May 6 and the subsequent ending of the boycotts will affect the security situation in Basrah. End Comment.

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